

The Gaza Families Reunited campaign (@GazaFamReunited on Twitter/X) coordinated the below joint letter and sent it to the Home Secretary on 2 April 2024. The letter was drafted in consultation with migrants' rights (including refugee rights) organisations as well as Palestinians seeking to bring their family members to safety from Gaza.

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2 Marsham Street

London

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2 April 2024

Dear Home Secretary,

On behalf of 75 organisations, law centres, law firms, and funders working in the migrants' (including refugees'), children's, and human rights' sectors across the UK, we are calling for you to urgently create a Gaza Family Scheme to enable family members of Palestinians in the UK to reunite with their loved ones and offer temporary sanctuary until it is safe to return.

With each passing hour, the situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate - both due to bombardment as well as lack of access to food or medication. More than 30,000 people have been killed - a third of whom are children - with many more remaining uncounted while trapped under the rubble. Palestinians are currently bracing for Israel's threatened ground assault on Rafah - formerly claimed as a 'safe zone' for civilians - in spite of widespread international outcry, including on the part of the British Government.

Existing immigration routes are insufficient and not working. Palestinians eligible under existing routes cannot make an immigration application to be cleared for entry to the UK unless they have enrolled their biometrics. However, the only visa application centres where Palestinians can actually do so are in Egypt. Unlike in the case of British nationals, for whom the British Government has facilitated evacuation to Egypt, the British Government is not facilitating safe passage for Palestinians in Gaza seeking to reunite with their family members in the UK. Palestinians in Gaza are thus trapped in a catch-22: the British Government is demanding that they register biometrics, but it is denying them a viable way of doing so.

Many families are now being forced to set up crowdfunders in the sum of tens of thousands of pounds to arrange for their loved ones to be evacuated to Egypt by a private company. While it is possible to apply to defer or waive biometric requirements, despite the clearly dangerous (and in some cases, virtually impossible) journey involved in enrolling biometrics in Egypt, almost all of these applications are rejected. Two people [have been killed](#) while waiting for a decision on their family reunion visa under existing routes. Even if families are able to pay for their loved ones' evacuation into Egypt, not all family members are eligible under existing routes and those who are have to pay additional, extortionate visa fees.

It is in this context that Palestinian families in the UK have called for a Gaza Family Scheme alongside a permanent and immediate ceasefire (supported by 71% of the British public, according to [a recent poll](#)). Modelled after the Ukraine Family Scheme, the Gaza Family Scheme would enable Palestinians in Gaza to reunite with their immediate and extended family members in the UK - including their partners, children, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, cousins, grandparents, and in-laws - until it is safe to return. It would also include provision for safe evacuation and biometric waiver/deferral, as was done for those fleeing Ukraine. Palestinians arriving on this scheme, as with the Ukrainian Family Scheme, would be able to work, study, and access public funds in the UK while they are granted temporary sanctuary here.

Over 56,000 members of the British public have supported [a petition](#) calling for a Gaza Family Scheme to be introduced in the UK. In our view, a Gaza Family Scheme is long overdue to protect human life and the right to family unity until it is safe for Palestinians to return. We, therefore, support the Gaza Families Reunited Campaign in its calls for such a scheme to be implemented with urgency.

Best regards,

Signatories

1. Asylum Support Appeals Project
2. Bail for Immigration Detainees
3. BARAC UK
4. Bates Wells Immigration Department
5. Birnberg Peirce Ltd
6. Care4Calais
7. Children and Families Across Borders
8. City of Sanctuary UK
9. Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)
10. Council for Arab-British Understanding (Caabu)
11. Coram Children's Legal Centre
12. Counterpoints Arts
13. Coventry Asylum & Refugee Action Group
14. Detention Action
15. Duncan Lewis
16. Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees
17. FODI (Sunderland)
18. GARAS
19. Govan Community Project
20. Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
21. Haringey Welcome
22. Helen Bamber Foundation
23. Here for Good
24. Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA)
25. Islington Law Centre
26. Jesuit Refugee Service UK
27. JustRight Scotland

28. Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights
29. Leigh Day Immigration and Asylum Team
30. Manchester Amnesty International group
31. Medact
32. Migrant Champions Network
33. Migrant Democracy Project
34. Migrants in Culture
35. Migrants Organise
36. Migrants' Rights Network
37. Migration Exchange
38. Migration Justice Project, Law Centre NI
39. Music Action International
40. New Citizen's Gateway
41. North West Migrants Forum
42. One Life To Live
43. Orchid of Siam
44. Paul Hamlyn Foundation
45. POMOC
46. Praxis
47. Rainbow Migration
48. RAMFEL
49. RefuAid
50. Refugee Action
51. Refugee Council
52. Refugee Legal Support
53. Reunite Families UK
54. Revoke CIC
55. Right to Remain
56. Riverway Law
57. Room to Heal
58. Safe Passage International
59. Samphire
60. Scottish Refugee Council
61. Social Workers Without Borders
62. Southeast and East Asian Centre
63. St Augustine's Centre, Halifax
64. Student Action for Refugees (STAR)
65. the3million
66. The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)
67. The Pickwell Foundation
68. The Voice of Domestic Workers
69. Together with Migrant Children
70. Voices in Exile
71. Waltham Forest Migrant Action (WFMA)
72. West London Welcome
73. West of Scotland Regional Equality Council
74. Women for Refugee Women
75. Work Rights Centre